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RECENT ACQUISITIONS OF
DRAWINGS*(Continued)*EPSOM ON DERBY DAY
DRAWING BY ROWLANDSON

FINALLY, we may consider shortly the drawings of the British School. Beginning with those of the eighteenth century, we have three important examples of Rowlandson (1756-1827). The earliest of these, "The Review," touches a note of dignity, almost of grandeur, which is rare in the work of a professed caricaturist. There is, no doubt, humorous observation in the types and attitudes of these soldiers resting for a moment in the midst of their evolutions, but the placing of the figures and the weightiness of their gestures have something of a deeper, more solemn feeling which almost foreshadows Daumier's serious and tragic view of the caricaturist's functions.

The uniforms of the soldiers indicate a date of about 1720. In the "Connoisseur," Rowlandson is seen at his most typical. The characterization of the musty old man with his voluminous wig and clumsy spectacles entirely absorbed in his valuation of the ladies' treasures, is admirable, and the contrast between him and his flighty and presumably extravagant companion is a genuine piece of eighteenth-century comedy of manner.

Here as always, in spite of the exaggeration of the caricaturist, Rowlandson shows that a pure love of beauty and sensuous charm is the dominant note in his art. He

has found a curiously exact parallel in our own day in the art of Charles Conder.

The third drawing represents the crowd on its way to Epsom on Derby Day, and here again a certain lyrical note in the landscape contrasts delightfully with the observation of the gross humors of the boisterous crowd. The brilliant economy of Rowlandson's technical processes are here obvious. This would appear to be a later drawing than the other two and belongs probably to the first decade of the nineteenth century.

Hoppner was an artist in whom the inherent defects of British art, its sentimentality of feeling and superficial technique, came only too prominently into notice. The drawing by him of a lady seated in an attitude conventionally expressive of sentimental distress is, however, an agreeable and charming expression of his art.

Sir David Wilkie, though born in 1785, belongs in feeling essentially to the nineteenth century. He was the first as well as the most brilliant of British genre painters, and the style he invented has dominated a great deal of the traditions of popular and anecdotic art of the last century. He himself was, however, a serious and capable painter, a real student of the Dutch tradition and a master of technical resources. The four sketches for the well-known picture "The Bride at Her Toilet on the Day of Her Wedding," show how closely he studied Rembrandt's methods, though he came no nearer to Rembrandt than the average of that master's pupils. The picture was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1838, which gives approximately the date of these rapid indications of his first idea for the composition.

Throughout the darkest period of artistic indigence which marks the middle Victorian era, one artist kept alive the hope of better things. Alfred Stevens, the sculptor (1817-1875), belonged in feeling to the later Renaissance and steadily applied the great ideas of style, which he derived from the study of del Sarto and Michelangelo, even to the humblest commissions which he was compelled to execute. He was no less remarkable as a

painter and draughtsman than as a sculptor. The drawing of a nude figure in sanguine by him shows the extraordinary purity and distinction of his taste no less than a nervous sense of the structural and expressive line which is rare even in the best work of the British School. The figure appears to be a first idea for a part of some monumental decoration like that of the dome of St. Paul's, for which he finished designs.

John Ruskin's reputation as a writer has so entirely overshadowed his fame as an artist that it may be something of a surprise to recognize by the large drawing of the colonnade of the Ducal Palace at Venice that he must be placed among the very best of modern architectural draughtsmen. His line has a vitality and a nervous variety of rhythm which places him as an interpreter of the poetical qualities of architecture immeasurably above such mechanical designers as Prout, whom Ruskin as a writer looked up to with reverent admiration. It is true that Ruskin left few drawings of the completeness and elaboration of this view of the Ducal Palace, but they prove that his mastery was greater than he himself appears ever to have appreciated. The drawing was made to illustrate the *Stones of Venice*, which first appeared in 1851.

The drawing by Burne-Jones of the "Bath of Venus" is in a peculiar technique, which seems justified, for such an essentially decorative design, by the felicitous richness of its effect. It is in a dull earthed monochrome, the light being put in in gold. The design is for the picture of the "Bath of Venus," which was begun in 1873 and not finished until 1878. This would appear to belong to the earlier date. It is signed in silver, "E. B. J." The mount has been retained as it was the design affected by Burne-Jones himself for his drawings.

Finally, belonging to quite modern times, we have a fully colored drawing by Wilson Steer, whose reputation as the leading British landscape painter is now generally recognized, and two sanguines by Augustus John, who has gained for himself a unique position as a draughtsman among the artists of the younger generation.

R. E. F.

THE STORY OF THE CONVERSION OF A SAINT

BY HENRICUS BLESIIUS (?)

THE little panel recently acquired by the Museum is a remarkably brilliant specimen of the painting of the Netherlands about 1520.

Though the tradition of that school was by then past its prime, and though the majority of artists like Bernard van Orley were given over to an exaggerated and florid style in which ostentatious display and manual dexterity prevailed over more important considerations, we find here and there an artist who still retained a certain freshness of feeling and a delightful though decadent invention. Perhaps the finest of these was the author of an "Adoration" at Munich signed "Henricus Blesius," and it is to him that I would tentatively ascribe our panel. At present, in spite of the researches of Friedlander and Hulin, our knowledge of this delightful artist is of a rudimentary kind. There is good reason for supposing him to be quite distinct from the landscape artist, Herri met de Bles, and to suppose that the signature on the Munich picture, "Henricus Blesius," though assuredly ancient, is due to some error on the part of an almost contemporary owner of the picture. For this reason our artist is frequently known as the "pseudo-Bles." To him we may ascribe a small group of pictures, the "Adoration" at Munich, two wings of a triptych in the Pourtales Collection, a "Beheading of the Baptist" in the Hainauer Collection, and perhaps the "Nativity, with St. Joseph," and the "Suitors" in the Cook Collection at Richmond, England. Should our picture also be ultimately ascribed to him it would indicate a possibility of Dutch origin or training for our artist, as there is much here to remind us of the Leyden school.

The subject of our picture is the conversion of a young saint. In the first scene he enters the choir of a partially completed church where the service is going on. In the second scene he has returned to his home and comes out still richly clad in the height of contemporary fashion, but is in the act of giving away his possessions to the beggars who surround him. The idea